



A University-Community-School Alliance

Reflection on Historical & Current Racist Tragedies

Recently, journalist/writer, Ta-Nehisi Coates, said that America is experiencing “a massive historical betrayal of its citizenry.” Americans, he says, “have been left to fend for ourselves.” For centuries, our systems of education have betrayed the students they swore to teach, students left to fend for themselves against a hostile world, without proper access to quality education. We have sought to rectify this injustice through the work of our organization. In the light of the present political upheaval, we want to explicitly re-capture the multi-layered history of FLAME.

As an affiliate of the National Alliance, “We the People---Math Literacy for All,” FLAME is rooted in the ideals of the Southern Freedom Movement, especially the legendary work of Bob Moses. From its inception, FLAME has pursued providing our betrayed youth—Black, Brown, Indigenous, Immigrant & poor White---with innovative mathematics curriculum and instruction in public schools.

We do this, knowing math literacy is essential for economic equity in a 21st century world. We do this, knowing it requires confronting long-standing issues of injustice and inequities in the quality of public education in this nation. We do this, knowing it requires, as a civil right, a new standard for education and citizenship in a democracy.

In this moment, the historical legacy of our nation’s state-led violence and structural racism once again has been thrown into sharp focus. The recent murders of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor (and the murders have yet to stop) force us to examine more critically, within our work with students, the nation’s failure to protect the constitutional rights of all.

Recognizing these recent tragedies, we declare our continued participation in the struggle for students and communities to be unshackled from violence and injustice, and, thus, free to pursue academic excellence and democratic ideals.

Because we, in FLAME, value schools as spaces where democratic transformation can happen, we know delivering equitable, structural opportunities for academic growth to all students, increases the value of our nation. Without quality of education for all, America can never be strong.

Thus, we will continue within our work to center the youth, violently forced to society's margins, because we know from Moses that "Young people finding their voice instead of being spoken for is a crucial part of the process" of making demands on public schools and the nation. No longer, can anyone allow our students to be used as sacrificial lambs to undemocratic engines of oppression.

As Moses reminds us, "In our time, across the country, it is black, Latino, and poor white students who are trapped at the bottom with prisons as their plantations." So, we are ramping-up our actions to support our students in liberating themselves from that trap, through our continued delivery of rich & rigorous math education and the development of quality teachers. We will continue to struggle to give equal power to students, teachers and parents as decision-makers in this process.

Through seeking and creating structural opportunities for teachers and students to pursue educational excellence, we will be constantly challenging the educational caste system that for centuries has dominated the landscape of America, that same caste system that dominates not only education but all the country's institutions.

Join us, our students, our teachers, our schools and communities in deciding what actions we now take to face full-tilt this historical, epochal opening to end state violence against our students, and to shift schools and the nation to a just and equitable, democratic union.